

Biography of Joseph McCoy

Alexandria Community Remembrance Project Research Committee, April 2020

Murdered in 1897, teenager Joseph McCoy lived his entire life in Alexandria. He was born as Reconstruction ended and the era of Jim Crow began. He grew up in The Bottoms neighborhood on South Alfred Street among his extended family of parents, siblings, cousins, aunts, and uncles.¹

The McCoy's had deep roots here. More than a half a century before Alexandria's citizens lynched Joseph McCoy, his grandmother Cecilia McCoy, was a free woman of color in the city. She raised her four children, Ann, Horatio, Eliza and John, while working as a washerwoman.²

Ann, the oldest, entered the working world before her fourteenth birthday. That meant leaving her mother and little brothers and sister to work in the household of Benoni Wheat on Prince Street.³

By the time she was out of her teens, however, Ann and her new husband Samuel Chase had a home together and began raising the next generation of Alexandrians. They were Harriet, Charles, Rachel, Samuel Jr, and eventually little Joseph, the baby of the family.⁴

When Ann died soon after Joseph's birth,⁵ Cecilia McCoy took the children into her house, just down the block from their father.⁶ Joseph's sister Harriet attended school right into her teen years.⁷ However, the other children went to work as soon as they were able, working as domestic servants or performing manual labor,⁸ as Joseph did for the Lacey family until April 23, 1897, when Richard Lacey accused him of attacking the Lacey children.

¹ *Joseph McCoy's grandmother and family, Uncle Horatio and family are listed in neighboring houses in 1870.* 1870 U.S. Census, roll M593_1632, page 154B. *Cecilia McCoy is listed living at 491 S. Alfred Street with Harriet, Samuel Jr., and Joseph. Samuel Chase is listed living with his second wife and her children at 439 S. Alfred Street in 1880.* 1880 U.S. Census, Alexandria, Virginia, Roll: 1351; Page: 406A; Enumeration District: 005, Ancestry.com, accessed December 1, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>.

² *Cecilia McCoy is listed living with Horatio, Eliza, and John.* 1850 U.S. Census, Alexandria, Virginia, population schedule, Alexandria, Roll M432_932; Page 320A, Image 64, family number 215, Ancestry.com, accessed December 1, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>.

³ *Ann McCoy is listed as a domestic servant in the household of merchant Benoni Wheat at 207 Prince Street.* 1850 U.S. Census, Alexandria, Virginia, Roll M432_932, Page: 363B, Image 728, family number 396, Ancestry.com, accessed December 1, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>.

⁴ *Samuel and Ann Chase are listed living with Harriet, Charles, and Rachel, with only Samuel given an employment status (laborer).* 1860 U.S. Census, Alexandria, Virginia, population schedule, Alexandria Roll M653_1331, Page 825, family number 1103, Ancestry.com, accessed December 1, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>.

⁵ *Harriet McCoy is listed as "at school" at age 14.* 1870 U.S. Census, *ibid*.

⁶ *Cecilia McCoy is listed living at 491 S. Alfred Street with Harriet, Samuel Jr., and Joseph. Samuel Chase is listed living with his second wife and her children at 439 S. Alfred Street.* 1880 U.S. Census, Alexandria, Virginia, Roll: 1351; Page: 406A; Enumeration District: 005, Ancestry.com, accessed December 1, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>.

⁷ *Samuel Chase is identified as a widower when he remarries in 1885.* *Virginia, Select Marriages, 1785-1940* . Ancestry.com, accessed December 1, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>.

⁸ *Samuel Chase Jr is listed as employed "doing chores,"* 1880 U.S. Census, *ibid*. *Charles Chase is listed as a domestic servant in the household of physician F.J. Murphy,* 1870 U.S. Census, *ibid*.